



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

| APPLICATION NO.   | FILING DATE | FIRST NAMED INVENTOR | ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.           | CONFIRMATION NO. |
|---|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 09/704,638  | 11/01/2000  | Eric W. Doerr        | 06576-105027<br>(MS#150521.1) | 4500             |
| 45979   | 7590        | 04/13/2006           | EXAMINER                      |                  |
| PERKINS COIE LLP/MSFT<br>P. O. BOX 1247<br>SEATTLE, WA 98111-1247 |             |                      | JARRETT, SCOTT L              |                  |
|   |             |                      | ART UNIT                      | PAPER NUMBER     |
|   |             |                      | 3623                          |                  |

DATE MAILED: 04/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

09/704,638

Applicant(s)

DOERR ET AL.

Examiner

Scott L. Jarrett

Art Unit

3623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 February 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-37 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-37 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)             | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)                     |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)     | Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____  |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____  | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                    |

### **DETAILED ACTION**

1. This non-final office action is in response to Applicant's amendment filed February 24, 2006. Applicant's amendment amended claims 14 and 16. Currently Claims 1-37 are pending.

### ***Response to Amendment***

2. The objection to the Title in the previous office action is withdrawn in response to Applicant's amendments to the Title.

The USC 101 rejection of Claims 17-24 is withdrawn.

The USC 112(2) rejection of Claims 14 and 16 is withdrawn in response to Applicant's amendments to Claims 14 and 16.

It is noted that the applicant did not challenge the officially noticed fact(s) cited in the previous office action(s) therefore those statements as presented are herein after prior art. Specifically it has been established that it was old and well known in the art at the time of the invention:

- to enable users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system (e.g. change fonts, hide/show information/columns, etc.);
- to utilize Boolean expressions/logic (variables) to "flag" information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false;

- to capture information via a dialog box thereby providing a convenient mechanism for prompting users to enter information into a system (software, program, etc.) wherein once the information is entered and approved (OK button) it is entered (stored, saved, retained, duplicated, etc.) into the system for use at a future point in the process (display, edit, report, etc.);

- to utilize Boolean expressions/logic (flags) to indicate that a desired/required condition is true/false (yes/no, 0/1) wherein the Boolean variables are set, according to the value of the condition (e.g. if (input.EstimatedDuration == "yes") then EstimatedDuration = 1), and then tested in order to evaluate (test, check, verify, validate, confirm, compare, etc.) the Boolean expression (e.g. if (EstimatedDuration) then display.EstimatedDurationCharacter) as part of a control statement within a system/program;

- to compare inputs to an expected value (e.g. switch statements) as part of a control statement in a system/program wherein upon the receipt of an expected input the system executes a set of desired logic/actions (e.g. setting a value of a variable, branching to another program, etc.) or upon the receipt of unrecognized/unexpected values "catching and throwing" those errors utilizing well-known error handling techniques (tools, methods, approaches, etc.);

- to summarize project information utilizing roll-up/summary tasks provides a convenient mechanism for summarizing/displaying, at a higher level, the pertinent details inherited from the child tasks/activities;

- to receive information in one format and then to display the same information in another format (e.g. a user completes a form wherein the users "answers" a plurality of multiple choice questions (radio buttons, check boxes, etc.) and after completing the survey the system restates the users answers using text representing the answers to the questions provided; and

- to provide drop-down list(s) to collect user information provides a simple and efficient mechanism for collecting user input/data (e.g. reducing amount of typing, reduce typographical errors, restrict users to entering only specific values true/false, on/off, etc.).

### ***Response to Arguments***

3. Applicant's arguments, see Last Paragraph, Page 13, filed February 24, 2006, with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 1, 17, 25-27 and 33 under USC 102(b) have been fully considered and are persuasive. Therefore, the rejection has been withdrawn. However, upon further consideration, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of Clark, Douglas, U.S. Patent No. 6,889,196 (Claims 1-3); Microsoft Project 98 (Claims 4-6, 25-26 and 31); @Risk (Claims 17-20, 23 and 33-35); Microsoft Project 98 in view of @Risk (Claims 7-16, 27-30 and 32) and @Risk in view of Microsoft Project 98 (Claims 21-22, 24 and 36-37).

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

5. Claims 4-6, 25-26 and 31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Microsoft Project 98 as evidenced by at least Pyron, Tim, Teach Yourself Microsoft Project 98 in 24 Hours (1998).

Regarding Claim 4 MS Project teaches a method and system for displaying estimated duration character (string, indicia, icon, symbol, text, etc.) where the duration character is text that indicates that a time period is an estimate (i.e. not an actual duration) comprising (estimated/actual/scheduled duration fields, estimated/baseline/original duration, etc.; “The actual date fields display "NA" until you take a step that sets an actual date. You can remove the actual date by typing NA in an actual date field.”, Hour 17 - Tracking Work on the Project - Tracking Actual Performance, Page 2; Bullets 1-5, Page 3; Hour 17 - Tracking Work on the Project – Recording Actual Work, Pages 1-2; Hour 17 - Tracking Work on the Project, Pages 1-2; Hour 4 – Turning the Task List Into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration – Pages 1, 3; “Actual values replace scheduled values and make the scheduled values fixed, as far as Project's calculator is concerned.”, Figure 17.1; Figures 3.8, 14.10, 17.5):

- determining if sheet or dialog mode should be used (i.e. user selects to enter project data via sheet mode, Figure 17.5 or via a dialog window/box/mode, Figure 14.6;
- wherein if sheet mode, the user enters duration field and enters an estimated duration character in a duration field (Figures 17.5, 14.10); and
- wherein if the dialog mode , the user accesses a dialog box to enter duration value and either enters the estimated duration character (string, text, icon, symbol, indicia, etc.) or checks (select, chooses, etc.) an estimated duration field; and running the sheet or dialog modes to display the estimated duration character (Figures 17.6, 14.10).

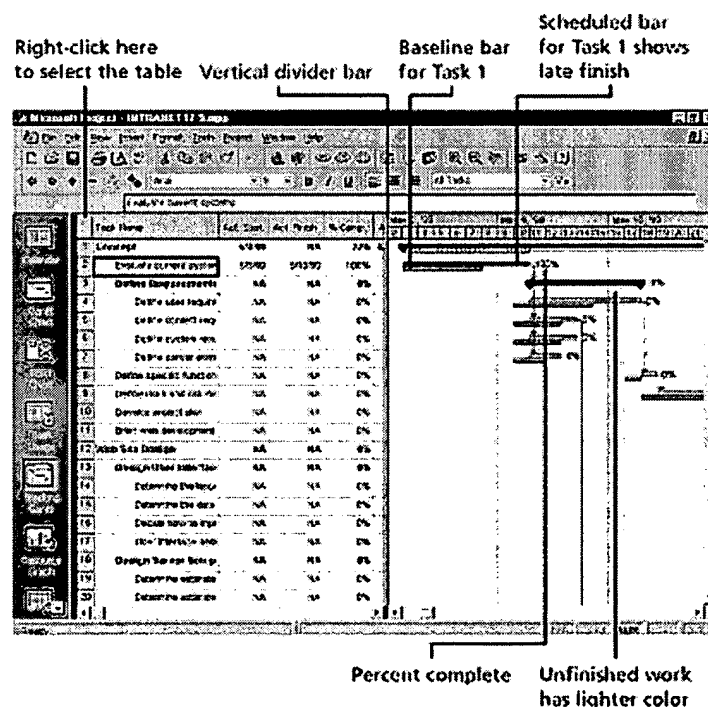


Figure 1: Pyron, Figure 17.5

Regarding Claims 5-6 MS Project teaches a project management system and method for displaying estimated as well as actual project task durations further comprising at least sheet and dialog modes that enable users to enter, view, analyze and report on a plurality of project information including but not limited to estimated and definite project task durations (Figure 14.10) wherein users utilize well known graphical user interface/human computer interaction metaphors/actions (mouse clicks, cursors, etc.) to navigate amongst the plurality of screens, windows and dialog boxes (Hour 1. Getting Started with Microsoft Project 98 - Exploring the Microsoft Project Window, Pages 1-3; Hour 1. Getting Started with Microsoft Project 98 – Understanding Views, Pages 1-4; Figures 1.10-1.15, 14.10).

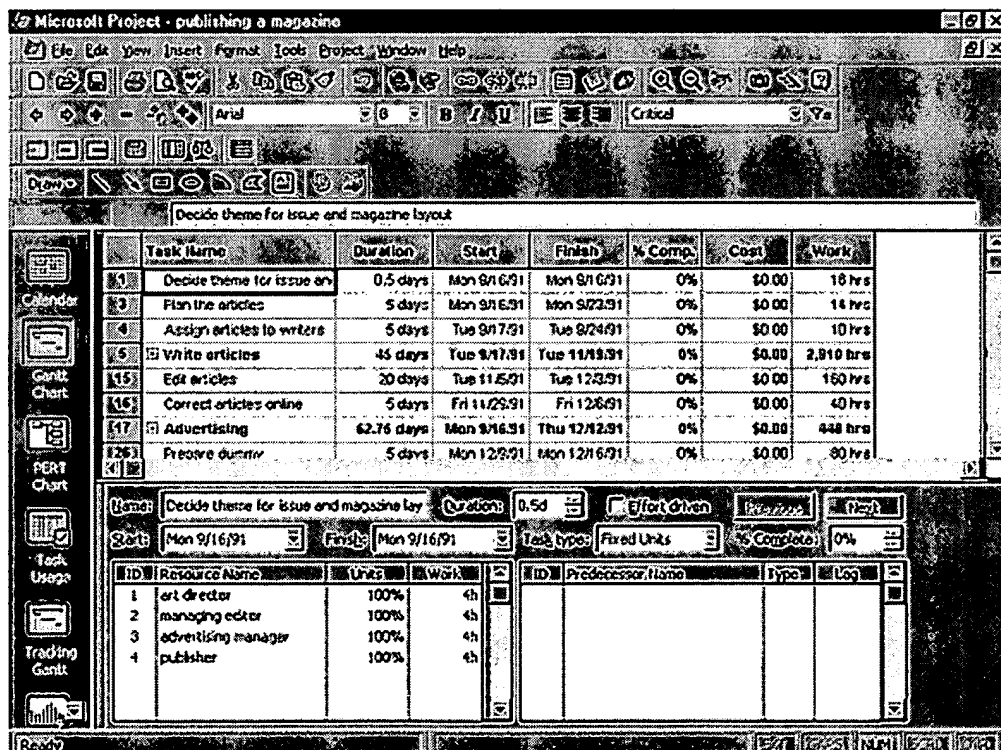


Figure 2: Pyron, Figure 14.10



Regarding Claim 25 MS Project teaches a project management system and method for specifying durations comprising:

- receiving from a user a duration of a project task and an indication that the duration is estimated (planned, forecasted, predicted, tentative, etc.) or definite (actual; i.e. “descriptions of tasks”; “Project tags the current schedule field as “fixed” now that an actual value is known”, Hour 17 - Tracking Work on the Project, Bullet 2, Page 3);
- storing an indication of the duration of the project tasks is estimated (Hour 4 – Turning Task List Into A Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3); and
- when displaying the duration of the project task, displaying an indication that the duration is estimated (Hour 4 – Turning Task List Into A Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3; Hour 17, Tracking Work on Project – Tracking Actual Performance, Page 2; Bullets 1-5, Page 3).

Regarding Claim 26 MS Project teaches a project management system and method further comprising displaying an indication as to whether a task duration is estimated or definite (Hour 4 – Turning Task List Into A Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3; Hour 17, Tracking Work on Project – Tracking Actual Performance, Page 2; Bullets 1-5, Page 3).

Regarding Claim 31 MS Project teaches a project management system and method for specifying durations wherein the durations are estimated by default (Hour 4 – Turning Task List Into A Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3).

Art Unit: 3623

6. Claims 17-20, 23 and 33-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by Palisade's @Risk as evidenced by at least Palisade.com Web Pages (May-June 2000).

Regarding Claims 17, 33 and 35 @Risk teaches a project planning system and method for specifying durations comprising (Page 1, Paragraph 1; Figures 1, 3, 5):

- receiving from a user a duration of a project task and an indication that the duration is estimated (uncertain, risky, variable, planned, forecasted, predicted, tentative, possible, etc.; Paragraph 8, Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4; "Construction[Duration]=RiskNormal(Design[Duration],5)", Paragraph 4, Page 6);
- storing an indication of the duration of the project tasks is estimated (Paragraph 1, Page 1; Risk Toolbar, Save, Figure 1); and
- when displaying the duration of the project task, displaying an indication that the duration is estimated (probability of duration, range of task/project durations – inherently indicating the uncertain/estimated nature of the task/project duration; Figures 1, 3, 5).

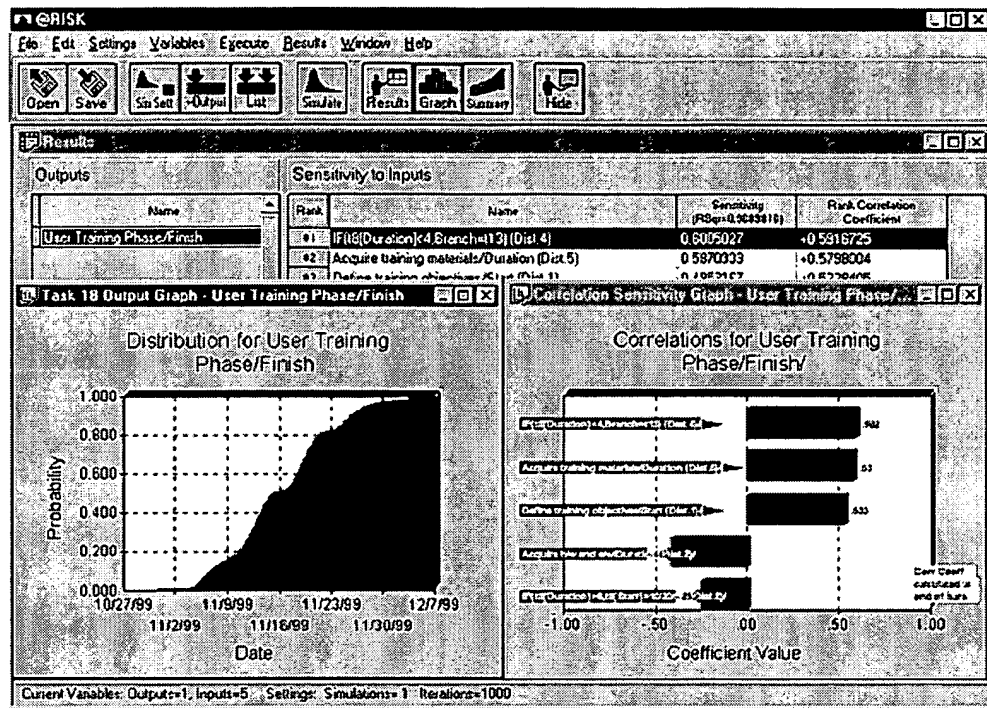


Figure 3: Figure 1, Page 1

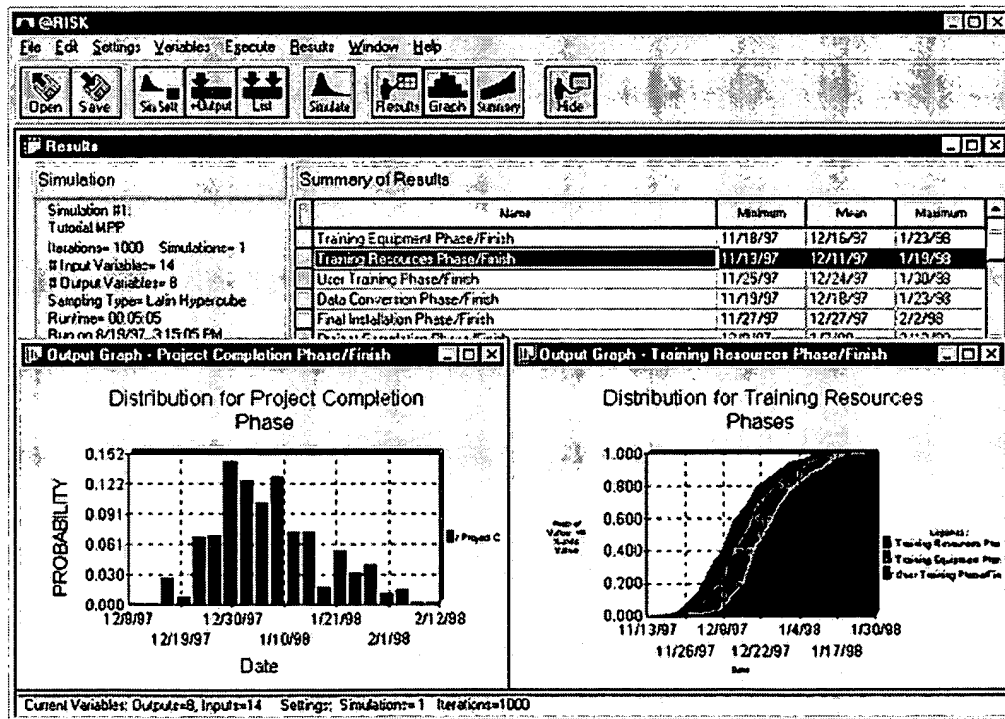
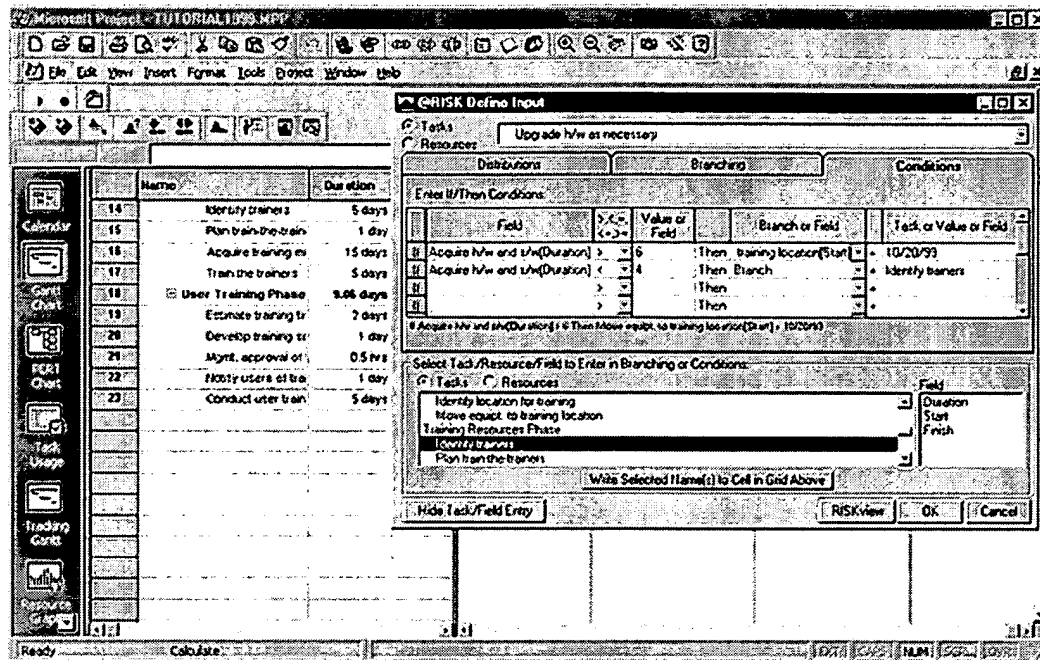


Figure 4: Figure 3, Page 3



**Figure 5: Figure 5, Page 5**

Regarding Claim 18 @Risk teaches a system and method for project management utilizing uncertain/estimated task durations wherein the received indication and the displayed indication are in different formats (e.g. receiving task/project duration as a text/input string and displaying as a graph/chart; Last Paragraph, Page 4; “Construction[Duration] =RiskNormal(Design[Duration],5)”, Paragraph 4, Page 6; Figures 1, 3, 5).

Regarding Claims 19 and 34 @Risk teaches a system and method for project management utilizing uncertain/estimated task durations wherein the received indication is a symbol (character, indicia, marking, etc.) of uncertainty is part of a string (input) that includes the duration ("Construction[Duration]=RiskNormal(Design[Duration],5)",

Art Unit: 3623

Paragraph 4, Page 6; wherein "RiskNormal" indicates not only that the duration is estimated but also the type of estimate/approximation distribution to be modeled and displayed; Page 2).

Regarding Claim 20 Risk teaches a system and method for project management utilizing uncertain/estimated task durations wherein the received indication that the duration is estimated is selection of an estimated field (e.g. @Risk task definition window defines task related information include duration estimations, distributions, etc., Figure 5; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4; Last Paragraph, Page 5).

Regarding Claim 23 @Risk teaches a project management system and method for managing uncertain project durations wherein project durations are estimates (uncertain, not definite, not actual, projected, etc.) by default (i.e. setting a duration as estimated if no indication regarding the tasks duration is estimated or not is received; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4).

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Clark, Douglas, U.S. Patent No. 6,889,196.

Regarding Claim 1 Clark teaches a computer-implemented system for displaying an estimated duration character (indicia, visual indicator, symbol, etc.), where the estimated duration character indicates that a time period is estimated, comprising (e.g. tasks/activities have estimated durations, include risks factors as well as measures on the predictive ability of the person/entity making the estimate which are taken into account in order to assess their impact on the project's overall schedule risk; Column 3, Lines 5-37; Column 4, Lines 9-14; Column 10, Lines 42-63; Column 12, Lines 10-68; Column 14; Figures 2-3 and 10-11) :

- a user interface (Figure 2, Element 7; Figure 4, Elements 12, 14) for receiving a duration value, where the duration value string is text that indicates the time period duration and whether the time period is estimated (Column 6, Lines 39-63; Column 10, Lines 42-63; Column 12, Lines 10-68; Figure 5, Elements 24, 26; Figure 8; Figure 10, Elements 120, 130, 132, 136, 138, 140);
- a storage for storing the value string (database; Figures 2-3); and

Art Unit: 3623

- a display for interpreting (displaying, forming, presenting, etc.) the duration value string and for showing the estimated duration character in a field (area, region, graph, etc.; Column 13, Lines 19-64; Column 14, Lines 17-68; Column 15, Lines 43-57; Figure 11).

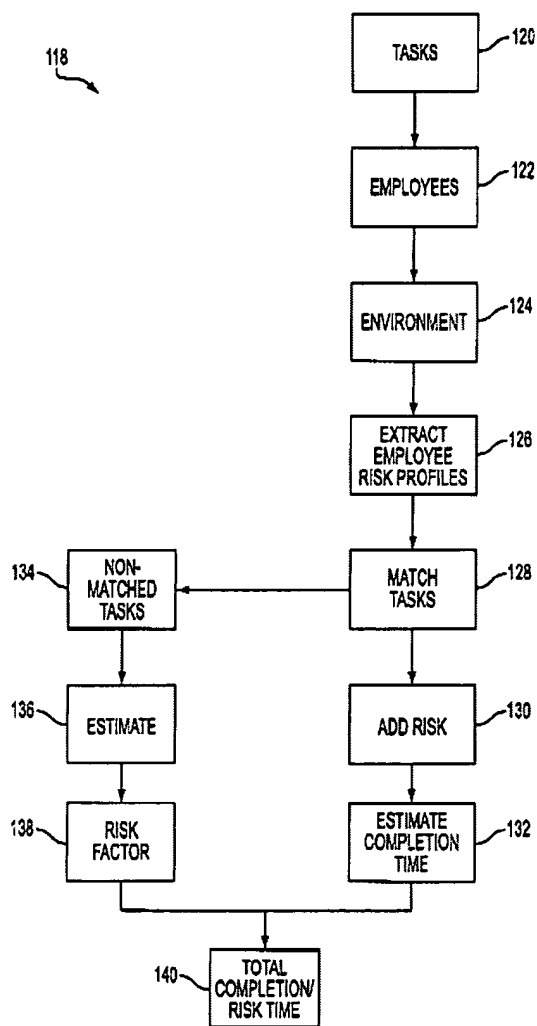


FIG. 10

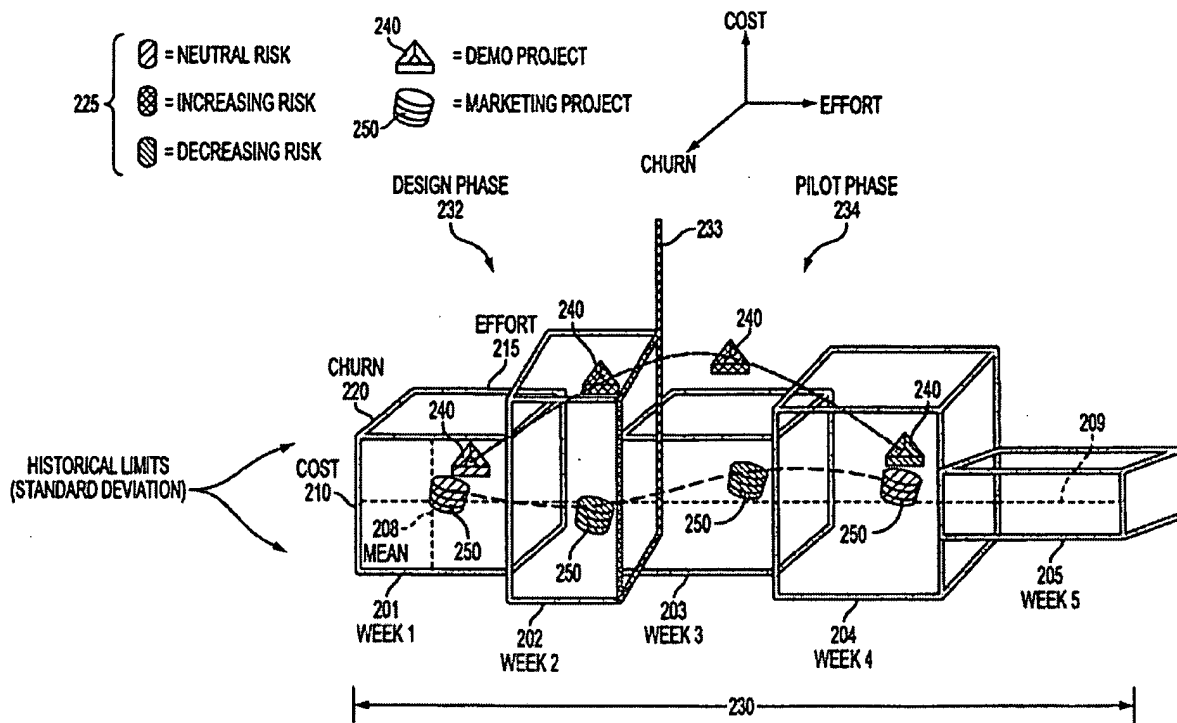


FIG. 11

Clark does not expressly teach that the system and method for project management comprising estimated project durations receives the duration value as a string or subsequently includes a parser for separating the duration value string so it can be interpreted as claimed.

Official notice is taken the receiving user input in the form of a text string is old and very well known in the art of computer systems. For example, it is very old and very common to use command line prompts to capture character strings from users wherein the users enter a string which indicates the desired/required operating parameters (values, switches, etc.) for the invoked program/system.



Official notice is taken that parsing (separating, delineating, capturing, de-tokenizing, etc.) input strings into their constituent parts (variables, statements, tokens, substrings, key-value pairs, etc.) is old and very well known in the art of computer systems wherein such “parsers” enable computers systems to accept and interpret pass data strings (e.g. string/value pairs) efficiently.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the system and method for planning and illustrating the inherent estimated (tentative, predicted, forecasted, expected, uncertain, etc.) of project/task durations with its ability to accept data regarding the uncertainty of an estimated duration as taught by Clark would have benefited from utilizing well known techniques/subsystems to accept and interpret user data including utilizing input strings (e.g. command line arguments, key-value pair strings) and the subsequent use of parsers to parse and interpret text strings in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system/method providing a convenient mechanism for accepting user data.

Regarding Claims 2-3 Clark teaches a system and method for displaying risk associated with a project’s estimated/uncertain schedule for the purposes of assisting users (project managers, team members, etc.) to accurately estimate when projects/tasks will be completed (Column 4, Lines 9-14) wherein the duration value comprises:

Art Unit: 3623

- a duration value, which is the value internally used by the system (estimated length, start, stop time, etc.; Column 10, Lines 42-63; Column 12, Lines 10-15 and 46-62); and
- the storage comprises memory for storing the duration value string (database; Figures 2-3).

Clark teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4; "Construction[Duration]=RiskNormal(Design[Duration],5)", Paragraph 4, Page 6; wherein "RiskNormal" indicates not only that the duration is estimated but also the type of estimate/approximation distribution to be modeled and displayed; Page 2).

Clark further teaches that the system/method for illustrating the uncertainty (risk) associated with project costs, schedules and the like utilizes any of a plurality of visual indicia (colors, graphs, symbols, etc.) to represent (display, illustrate, present; Column 14, Lines 17-25; Figure 11).

While Clark teaches that "Various colors, symbols, or markings can be used to distinguish the risk" (Column 14, Lines 23-25) Clark is silent on how the various types of displays/indicia would be implemented in the computer system subsequently Clark does not expressly teach an estimated flag, which indicates that the estimated duration should be displayed, as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts and/or hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean expressions/logic (variables) to “flag” information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well know.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive, store and display estimated project task durations as taught by Clark would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.) in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Art Unit: 3623

9. Claims 7-16, 27-30 and 32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Microsoft Project 98 as evidenced by at least Pyron, Tim, Teach Yourself Microsoft Project 98 in 24 Hours (1998) as applied to claims 4-6, 25-26 and 31 above and further in view of Palisade's @Risk as evidenced by at least Palisade.com Web Pages (May-June 2000).

Regarding Claims 7-8 MS Project teaches a project management system and method wherein running (executing) the sheet/dialog modes further comprise:

- copies of the estimated duration fields (Figures 1.15, 14.10);
  - inputting a duration value string wherein the duration value string is text that indicates the duration and whether the duration is estimated ("The actual date fields display "NA" until you take a step that sets an actual date. You can remove the actual date by typing NA in an actual date field.", Hour 17 - Tracking Work on the Project - Tracking Actual Performance, Page 2);
- storing the duration value; and
- closing the dialog box/mode/window (Figures 3.8-3.9);
  - inputting (entering, submitting, providing, etc.) a duration wherein the duration includes a duration (time period, time, length, amount, 3d, 3w, etc.) and an indication that the duration is an estimate (task durations are by definition estimates until actual durations are entered; Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3);

Art Unit: 3623

- storing in memory the duration (Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3); and
- displaying the duration (Figures 1.15, 14.10).

MS Project inherently teaches separating (parsing, tokenizing, etc.) the entered (inputted, submitted, etc.) duration strings with its ability accept user input (entered duration) in the form of strings (e.g. 3d, 3 month; Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3; Figure 4.2) that the system/method then parses (separates) in order to identify, store and display the individual project task duration parameters entered.

MS Project further teaches the utilization of well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences and other project data via dialog windows (i.e. that inherently open and closed based on user input; Figures 3.8-3.9, 4.2) containing text fields, radio buttons (typically representing Boolean values/parameters), checkboxes, flags (Figure 4.2), pull-down menus and the like.

MS Project teaches utilizing flags (Booleans, checkboxes, etc.) to show/hide various information (tasks, summary tasks, etc.; Figure 3.5).

MS Project does not expressly teach that the project duration value/string comprises a display type and estimated flag as claimed.

@Risk teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4; "Construction[Duration]=RiskNormal(Design[Duration],5)", Paragraph 4, Page 6; wherein "RiskNormal" indicates not only that the duration is estimated but also the type of estimate/approximation distribution to be modeled and displayed; Page 2) in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1; Figures 1, 3, 5).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing an estimated duration string further comprising an estimated duration display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Neither MS Project nor @Risk expressly teach that the project duration value/string includes an estimated flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean logic (variables, expressions, etc.) to “flag” information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well known. More specifically it is old and well known that Boolean variables have only two values true (yes, 1, etc.) or false (no, 0, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by the combination of MS Project and @Risk would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.; e.g. if the inputted estimated/tentative duration display flag is true setting the flag to yes)

in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Regarding Claim 9 MS Project teaches a project management system and method wherein closing the dialog box (window, screen, mode, etc.) comprises the use of well known user interface metaphors including presenting users with a pop-up/dialog box/window upon the entering of project data that asks if the user wished to save/approve and/or cancel/not save the data (Figures 3.8-3.9, 4.7, 17.2) comprising:

- determining in the users wants to "OK or "cancel" the user choice data;
- duplicating (copying, saving, storing, etc.) the project data value if the user OK's the user choice data; and
- closing the dialog box without duplicating the duration value if the user cancels the user choice data.

MS Project does not expressly teach that the project/task duration string further includes a display type or estimated flag as claimed.

@Risk teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4) in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a



uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing an estimated duration string comprising the estimated duration and display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Neither MS Project nor @Risk expressly teach that the project duration value/string comprises an estimated flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean logic (variables, expressions, etc.) to "flag" information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags

Art Unit: 3623

serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well know. More specifically it is old and well known that Boolean variables have only two values true (yes, 1, etc.) or false (no, 0, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by the combination of MS Project and @Risk would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.; e.g. if the inputted estimated/tentative duration display flag is true setting the flag to yes) in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Regarding Claim 10 MS Project teaches wherein users enter estimated project task duration information (string, text, characters, etc.) that the system inherently separates/parses into the duration value and duration type/units in order to identify, store and display the individual project task duration parameters entered (e.g. users enter estimated task durations strings such as 1.5h which MS Project inherently parses and interprets as a duration of 1.5 hours; Hour 4 Turning the Task List Into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1-2).

MS Project does not expressly teach that the composite duration string further comprises a display type, estimated flag or subsequently checking the flag as claimed.

@Risk teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4) in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing an estimated duration string comprising an estimated duration display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Neither MS Project nor @Risk expressly teach that the project duration value/string includes an estimated flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean logic (variables, expressions, etc.) to “flag” information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well known. More specifically it is old and well known that Boolean variables have only two values true (yes, 1, etc.) or false (no, 0, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by the combination of MS Project and @Risk would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.; e.g. if the inputted estimated/tentative duration display flag is true setting the flag to yes)

Art Unit: 3623

in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Neither MS Project nor @Risk expressly teach that checking the estimated flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean expressions/logic (flags) to indicate that a desired/required condition is true/false (yes/no, 0/1) wherein the Boolean variables are set, according to the value of the condition (e.g. if (input.EstimatedDuration == "yes") then EstimatedDuration = 1), and then tested in order to evaluate (test, check, verify, validate, confirm, compare, etc.) the Boolean expression (e.g. if (EstimatedDuration) then display.EstimatedDurationCharacter) as part of a control statement within a system/program is old and very well known.

Further official notice is taken that it is old and well known to compare inputs to expected value (e.g. switch statements) as part of a control statement in a system/program wherein upon the receipt of an expected input the system executes a set of desired logic/actions (e.g. setting a value of a variable, branching to another program, etc.) or upon the receipt of unrecognized/unexpected values "catching and throwing" those errors utilizing well-known error handling techniques (tools, methods, approaches, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by the combination of MS Project and @Risk would have benefited from utilizing well known programming/system development techniques including but not limited to Boolean logic/expressions to implement a flag for indicating if a project task/activity duration is estimated or definite in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system providing a convenient mechanism for internally representing (flagging) estimated durations.

Regarding Claim 11 MS Project teaches a project management system and method wherein displaying the duration further comprises obtaining (accessing, receiving, retrieving, etc.) the duration (estimated value and duration units; 3d) as discussed above.

MS Project further teaches utilizing well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences wherein users can control if particular information is shown or hidden (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks by flagging/setting the display type of the fields to display; Figure 3.5; Hour 3 Starting a New Project and Working with Tasks – Arranging Tasks in an Outline, Pages 1-3; Hour 17 Tracking Actual Performance, Last Bullet, Page 3, “Project does not show a summary task as finished until the last of its subtasks is finished.”).

MS Project does not expressly teach that the duration further comprises a display type, estimated flag or subsequently checking the flag in order to properly display the estimated duration as claimed.

@Risk teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4) in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing an estimated duration string comprising the estimated duration display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Neither MS Project nor @Risk expressly teach that the project duration value/string comprising an estimated flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

Further official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean logic (variables, expressions, etc.) to “flag” information (variables, results, etc.) in software programs wherein the flags serve to mark/indicate, internally and/or externally, that a condition is true or false is old and very well known. More specifically it is old and well known that Boolean variables have only two values true (yes, 1, etc.) or false (no, 0, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by the combination of MS Project and @Risk would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.; e.g. if the inputted estimated/tentative duration display flag is true setting the flag to yes)



Art Unit: 3623

in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Neither MS Project nor @Risk expressly teach checking the estimated flag as claimed.

Official notice is taken that utilizing Boolean expressions/logic (flags) to indicate that a desired/required condition is true/false (yes/no, 0/1) wherein the Boolean variables are set, according to the value of the condition (e.g. if (input.EstimatedDuration == "yes") then EstimatedDuration = 1), and then tested in order to evaluate (test, check, verify, validate, confirm, compare, etc.) the Boolean expression (e.g. if (EstimatedDuration) then display.EstimatedDurationCharacter) as part of a control statement within a system/program is old and very well known.

Further official notice is taken that it is old and well known to compare inputs to expected value (e.g. switch statements) as part of a control statement in a system/program wherein upon the receipt of an expected input the system executes a set of desired logic/actions (e.g. setting a value of a variable, branching to another program, etc.) or upon the receipt of unrecognized/unexpected values "catching and throwing" those errors utilizing well-known error handling techniques (tools, methods, approaches, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by the combination of MS Project and @Risk would have benefited from utilizing well known programming/system development techniques including but not limited to Boolean logic/expressions to implement a flag for indicating if a project task/activity duration is estimated or definite in view of the teachings of official notice; the resultant system providing a convenient mechanism for internally representing (flagging) estimated durations.

Regarding Claim 12 MS Project teaches a project management system and method wherein displaying the estimated duration value further comprises adding default estimated durations, as a string, to all newly entered tasks/activities (Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Understanding How Tasks are Scheduled, Bullet 1, Page 1, Bullet 1, Page 2; Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3; Figures 4.1, 4.5); parsing (i.e. determining the position and extracting and/or inserting the estimated duration value and estimated duration units (days, weeks, etc.) into/from the string and displaying, correctly, the estimated durations; Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3; Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Setting the Start or Finish Date, Paragraph 3, Page 1; Bullet 2, Page 2).

MS Project does not expressly teach utilizing an estimated duration character(s)/string comprising a display type as claimed.

@Risk teaches an estimated duration string comprising an estimated duration value and display type, as discussed above, in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

@Risk further teaches that the project management system/method parses and/or forms estimated duration strings/characters (Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4) wherein the string enables users to define and the system to interpret the value/range of the estimated duration as well as how to display the estimated duration.

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the system and method for managing projects as taught by MS Project with its ability to accept, interpret and display estimated duration strings would have benefited from including in those strings an estimated duration character(s) and display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to define a range of duration values (uncertainty functions) in order to model/simulate the effect of uncertain estimated durations on project schedules (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Regarding Claim 13 MS Project teaches the utilization of well known user interface tools (techniques, metaphors, approaches, etc.) to collect and present a

Art Unit: 3623

plurality of project information including but not limited to capturing user preferences that define how the information is shown/displayed (e.g. show/hide summary level tasks; Hour 3 Starting a New Project and Working with Tasks – Arranging Tasks in an Outline, Pages 1-3; Figure 3.5).

MS Project does not expressly teach enabling users the option of displaying/not displaying the estimated duration character (estimated duration display preference/setting) as claimed.

Official notice is taken that enabling users to decide how and/or what information (images, text, etc.) is to be displayed in a system is old and well known. For example users commonly change fonts, hide/show information (columns, rows, etc.) in a plurality of desktop applications (e.g. Microsoft Project, Excel, etc.).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method with its ability to receive and display estimated project task durations as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing a plurality of well known system (program, software, etc.) techniques/methods including but not limited to utilizing a flag (Boolean, variable, status, state, mark, etc.) to indicate that the estimated duration character (symbol, mark, indication, icon, etc.) should be displayed and/or not displayed (show/hide, on/off, etc.) in view of the

Art Unit: 3623

teachings of official notice; the resultant system enabling users to control what is displayed in the project management system.

Regarding Claim 14 MS Project teaches a project management system and method further comprising enabling the users to set a preference (setting) wherein new tasks durations have estimated duration by default until the user enters duration (Hour 4 Turning the Task List into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Page 1; Hour 17 – Tracking Work on The Project – Pages 1-2).

MS Project does not expressly teach that the default duration estimations are associated with estimated duration characters as claimed.

@Risk teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4) in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing an estimated duration string comprising the estimated duration and display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Regarding Claims 15 and 30 upon receiving an indication to display only those tasks whose durations are estimated, display an indication of each task.

MS Project teaches filtering tasks based on any of a plurality of pre-defined and/or user defined fields (Hour 14. Optimizing the Project Plan - Identifying the Critical Path, Page 1; Hour 14. Optimizing the Project Plan - Filtering Tasks or Resources, Page 1; Figures 14.14-14.18), including but not limited to actual duration and duration (estimated by default) project task durations, in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of identifying the project's critical path and/or enabling users to view user-defined/controlled subsets of the project information.

Regarding Claims 16 and 29 wherein tasks are hierarchically organized and wherein the parent task has at least one child task whose duration is estimated, indicating that the duration of the parent task is estimated.

MS Project teaches summarizing project information utilizing roll-up/summary tasks wherein parent tasks/summary tasks inherit/contain the properties/attributes contained in the child tasks/activities (Hour 3: Arranging Tasks with an Outline; Page 1 Figures 4.3, 4.5; Hour 17 Tracking Actual Performance, Last Bullet, Page 3, "Project does not show a summary task as finished until the last of its subtasks is finished.") in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of summarizing aspects of the child/sub-tasks (Hour 3: Arranging Tasks with an Outline; Page 1).

Regarding claim 27 MS Project teaches a system and method for managing project wherein in estimated durations comprise a string of having duration (3d) or an uncertainty character/symbol (e.g. "NA") as discussed above.

MS Project does not expressly teach that the indication as to whether the duration is estimated is a symbol of uncertainty specified as part of a string that includes a duration as claimed.

@Risk teaches that the project/task duration value/string comprises an estimated duration and estimated duration display type (e.g. display/model a normal distribution representing the uncertainty/risk associated with the estimated duration; Page 2; Last Three Paragraphs, Page 4) wherein the symbol (indicia, icon, text, characters, etc.) of uncertainty is specified as part of a string that includes ("Construction[Duration] =RiskNormal(Design[Duration],5)", Paragraph 4, Page 6; wherein "RiskNormal"

Art Unit: 3623

indicates not only that the duration is estimated but also the type of estimate/approximation distribution to be modeled and displayed; Page 2).in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the project management system and method as taught by MS Project would have benefited from utilizing an estimated duration string comprising the estimated duration and display type in view of the teachings of @Risk; the resultant system/method enabling users to replace uncertain project/task duration values with a uncertain/estimated duration functions thereby enabling users to represent a range of estimated durations and model the impact those estimated durations have on the overall project's schedule (@Risk: Paragraphs 1-2, Page 1).

Regarding claim 28 MS Project teaches a project management system and method wherein estimated and actual (definite) durations are entered into selected respective fields (selection of an estimated, current, baseline, actual fields; Hour 4 Turning Task List Into a Schedule – Estimating Task Duration, Pages 1, 3; Hour 17 – Tracking Work on the Project, Pages 1-2).



Art Unit: 3623

10. Claims 21-22, 24 and 36-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over are rejected over Palisade's @Risk as evidenced by at least Palisade.com Web Pages (May-June 2000) as applied to claims 17-20, 23 and 33-35 above and further in view of Microsoft Project 98 as evidenced by at least Pyron, Tim, Teach Yourself Microsoft Project 98 in 24 Hours (1998).

Regarding Claim 21 and 36 @Risk teach a system and method for project management utilizing uncertain/estimated task durations wherein the project tasks are hierarchically organized and wherein when a project task has at least one task whose duration is estimated (Figure 5).

@Risk further teaches that the system/method for quantifying project risks is integrated with Microsoft Project 98 (Page 1, Page 1).

@Risk does not expressly teach indicating that the duration of the parent task is estimated if the child task contains an estimated duration as claimed.

MS Project teaches summarizing project information utilizing roll-up/summary tasks wherein parent tasks/summary tasks inherit/contain the properties/attributes contained in the child tasks/activities (Hour 3: Arranging Tasks with an Outline; Page 1; Hour 17 Tracking Actual Performance, Last Bullet, Page 3, "Project does not show a summary task as finished until the last of its subtasks is finished."; Figures 4.3, 4.5) in

Art Unit: 3623

an analogous art of project management for the purposes of summarizing aspects of the child/sub-tasks (Hour 3: Arranging Tasks with an Outline; Page 1).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the system and method for managing the uncertainty of project task durations as taught by @Risk would have benefited from indicating that the duration of the parent task is estimated if the child task contains an estimated duration in view of the teachings of MS Project 98; the resultant system/method providing users with a summary of parent's (top-level) child/sub-tasks (Pyron: Hour 3: Arranging Tasks with an Outline; Page 1).

Regarding Claims 22 and 37 @Risk does not expressly teach displaying only tasks whose durations are estimated upon receiving an indication to display such tasks.

MS Project teaches filtering tasks based on any of a plurality of pre-defined and/or user defined fields (Hour 14. Optimizing the Project Plan - Identifying the Critical Path, Page 1; Hour 14. Optimizing the Project Plan - Filtering Tasks or Resources, Page 1; Figures 14.14-14.18), including but not limited to actual duration and duration (estimated by default) project task durations, in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of identifying the project's critical path and/or enabling users to view user-defined/controlled subsets of the project information.

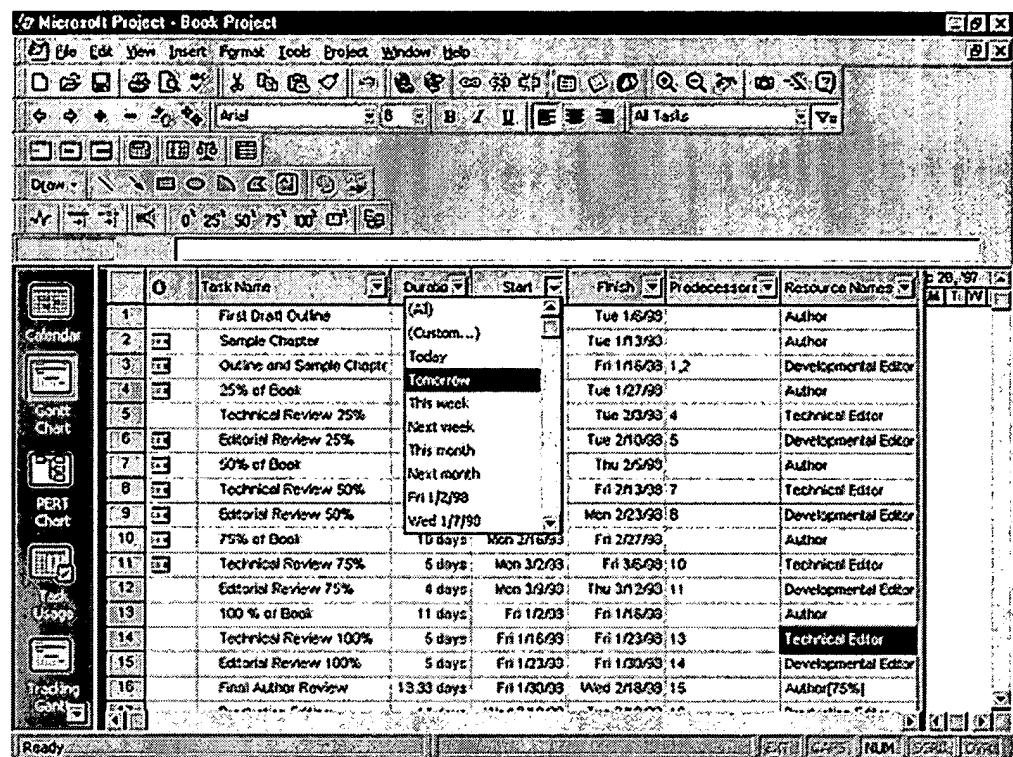


Figure 6: Pyron, Figure 14.4

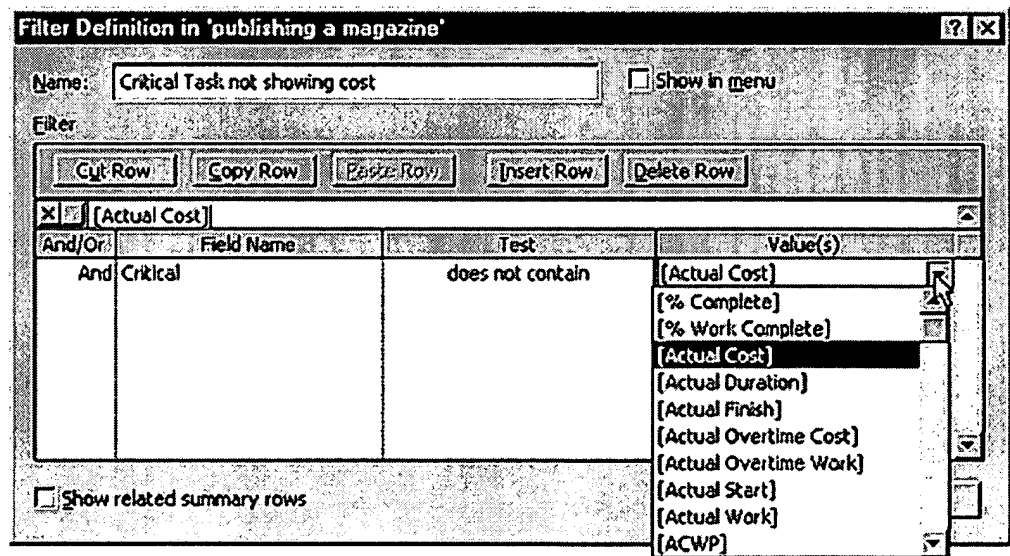
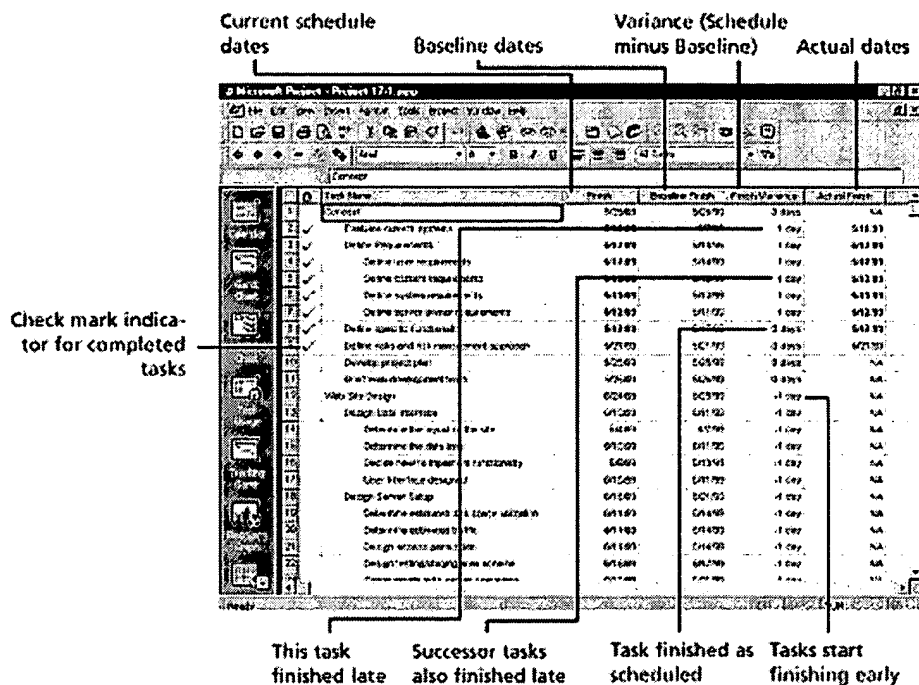


Figure 7: Pyron, 14.6

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time of the invention that the system and method for managing the uncertainty of project task durations as taught by @Risk would have benefited from enabling users to filter (sort) any of the plurality of project data, including but not limited to project task duration information, in view of the teachings of MS Project; the resultant system/method enabling users to view/analyze subsets of project information/data that meet certain conditions so that only those tasks or resources meeting those conditions are displayed (Hour 14. Optimizing the Project Plan - Filtering Tasks or Resources, Page 1).

Regarding Claim 24 @Risk does not expressly teach changing/indicating an estimate is definite and/or storing the definite estimate as claimed.

MS Project teaches changing an estimated project task duration to a definite/actual task duration and storing the actual task duration in an analogous art of project management for the purposes of enabling users track actual work progress/completed vs. estimated/planned project activities (durations, start/end dates, number of resources, etc.) as well as perform a plurality of analysis including but not limited to earned value (Part VI: Managing and Tracking the Project – Hour 17: Tracking Work on the Project, Pages 1-2; Hour 17: Tracking Work on the Project – Understanding Tracking Fields – Pages 1-2; Figure 17.1, 17.5).



### ***Conclusion***

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- Powell, Roger, U.S. Patent No. 5,291,397, teach a project management system and method wherein project/task/activity duration estimates are assigned one or more duration estimates (baselines) and actual durations wherein deviations between the one or more estimates as well as the actual duration is captured and displayed (e.g. slack time).

- Valko, Andrew, U.S. Patent No. 5,303,170, teach a project management system and method wherein task/activity durations estimates are represented using a text string (e.g. x+20, duration block; "each activity has a duration which can also be varied based on a programming statement"). Valko further teaches that the project management system and method uses well known programming techniques/approaches to take into account/model variations in the estimated activity durations including but not limited to Boolean, flags, condition blocks/statements, switch statements and the like.

- Isherwood, John Philip, U.S. Patent No. 5,918,219, teach a project management system and method for estimating project/task/activity durations.

- Fitzgerald, Joseph Michael, U.S. Patent No. 5,798,950, teach a system and method for estimating project tasks/activities wherein expected/estimated activity durations are scored/weighed in order to take into account project risks (e.g.

scoring/identifying the risk/uncertainty to each activities duration in order to account for the overall impact on the project's schedule).

- Finley, Eric, Project Scheduling Risk Assessment Using Monte Carlo Methods (1994), teaches a system/method for estimating project/task/activity durations in order to manage the risks/uncertainties associated with project/task durations (e.g. task durations are assigned a probability, represented as a string of characters, and not only indicate that the duration is an estimate but also to what extent the duration is an estimate).

- Ranasinghe, Malik, Quantification and management of uncertainty in activity duration networks (1994) teach a method for quantifying the uncertainty/risk associated with project/task duration estimates.

- Yang, Kum-Khiong, Effects of erroneous estimation of activity durations on scheduling and dispatching a single project (1996) teaches several methods for indicating and managing the uncertainty/risk associated with estimated task durations ("uncertainty inherent in most projects").

- Ock, Jong, Activity duration quantification under uncertainty – Fuzzy set theory application (1996) teaches the comparison of project duration estimation methods/techniques wherein some methods (critical path) assume durations can be estimated with certainty and others model duration estimates using uncertainties (e.g. text string "AD = ND + RD" wherein AD is the activity duration, ND is the normal activity duration and RD is the risk activity duration) in order to quantify the risk to the schedule/project due to the inherent uncertainty of projects.

- Dawood, Nashwan, Estimating project and activity duration: A risk management approach using network analysis (1998) teaches a well known method for indicating and estimating project task durations in order to “accurately model activity dependence and realistically predict project duration using a risk management approach.”

- Marsh, Thomas, Palisade upgrades @Risk software (1998) teaches a commercially available system and method for defining project task durations wherein estimated durations are represented using text strings that indicate that the duration is an estimate as well as define how the estimate is to be modeled and displayed.

- Cummings, Nigel, @Risk delivers richer picture (1999) teaches a system and method that models the uncertainties/risks associated with estimated project durations (probability functions) and enables users to extend Microsoft Project's ability to model/take into account task duration risks/uncertainties. Cummings further teaches that the task duration estimates are represented as text strings that indicate that the task duration is an estimate and what risk to associate with the estimated duration.

- ScramSoftware.com Web Pages (2000) teaches a commercially available system and method for modeling the uncertainties associated with project task duration estimates (stochastic duration analysis).

- Essentials of expressing measurement uncertainty (2006) teaches the old and very well known methods/techniques to indicate (express) uncertainty (the degree to which a value is estimated, unknown, risk, variable, etc.) including the well known use of characters to denote/indicate uncertainty (e.g. uncertainty statements).



Art Unit: 3623


Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Scott L. Jarrett whose telephone number is (571) 272-7033. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8:00AM - 5:00PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Hafiz Tariq can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

SJ  
4/8/2006



  
SUSANNA M. DIAZ  
PRIMARY EXAMINER

AU3623